

### **Remarks**

By the present Amendment, claims 1, 4 and 15 have been amended. Upon entry of the present Amendment, claims 1-15 will be pending in the Application.

The amendment to claims 1 and 4 is supported by the description on p.13, lines 16-17 of the present Specification. The amendment to claim 15 is supported by the description on p.229, lines 11-25 to p.230, lines 1-6 and p.230, lines 22-25 to p.231, lines 1-12.

Claims 1-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito ('505).

Ito ('505) discloses a back layer comprising a polymer latex having a high Tg of 25°C to 70°C, but does not disclose a water-soluble polymer in combination with the polymer latex.

It has been generally understood that a polymer latex contained in an outermost layer should have a high Tg, in order to avoid sticking when stacking. Ito discloses a polymer latex having a Tg near room temperature or higher (25°C to 70°C) for a protective layer or a back layer and a polymer latex having a lower Tg of -30°C to 40°C for an image forming layer.

The present invention aims to improve problems associated with transportation of a photothermographic material at high temperature during thermal development. More specifically, jamming of the photothermographic material can occur when the material is continuously transported during the imagewise exposure and thermal developing processes.

The above-described problems in transporting the photothermographic material have been solved by employing a back surface protective layer that includes a combination of a water-soluble polymer and a latex polymer having a glass transition temperature of  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $24^{\circ}\text{C}$  as a binder.

Ito does not disclose a lower Tg polymer latex of Tg =  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $24^{\circ}\text{C}$ , nor a water-soluble polymer as a binder for the back surface protective layer. Ito also does not recognize the transporting problems in thermal development during transporting at a high temperature. Consequently, it would not have been obvious for a worker of ordinary skill in the art at that time to achieve the invention.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all the claims in the application are in condition for allowance. Early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Nov. 9, 2005

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